



**Santa Cruz County
Regional Transportation Commission**

MINUTES

**Thursday, April 2, 2026
9:00 a.m.**

In-Person Meeting

Watsonville City Council Chambers
275 Main Street, Fourth Floor
Watsonville, CA 95076

**Remote Participation (see page 5 for more
information)**

RTC Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89597173447>

Dial-in: +1 312 626 6799

Webinar ID: 895 9717 3447

1. Roll call. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Members present:

City of Capitola

City of Santa Cruz

City of Scotts Valley

City of Watsonville

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District

Caltrans (ex-officio)

Gerry Jensen

Fred Keeley

Steve Clark

Eduardo Montesino

Manu Koenig

Kimberly DeSerpa

Andy Schiffrin (Alt.)

Monica Martinez

Lowell Hurst (Alt.)

Fabian Leonor

Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson

Rebecca Downing

John Olejnik (Alt.)

Staff present:

Sarah Christensen

Amin AbuAmara

Marshall Ballard

Krista Corwin

Brianna Goodman

Italo Jimenez

Bella Kressman

Shannon Munz

Yesenia Parra

Nisha Singh

Steve Mattas (RTC Counsel)

2. Additions or deletions to consent and regular agenda

Administrative Services Officer Yesenia Parra communicated that replacement pages for items 4, 11, and 21, handouts for items 14, and 21, and a Spanish version of the agenda was posted to the RTC website.

3. Oral Communications

Received public comment from:

Ilia Bulaich
Lani Faulkner, Equity Transit
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Christine Cumming
Michael Saint
Paula Bradley
Jim Helmer

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Clark made a motion and Commissioner Martinez seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Keeley, Clark, Montesino, Koenig, DeSerpa, Martinez, Leonor, Kalantari-Johnson, Downing, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin and Hurst voting "aye."

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now

MINUTES

4. Approved draft minutes of the March 5, 2026, Regional Transportation Commission meeting and the draft minutes of the March 19, 2026 special Regional Transportation Commission meeting
5. Accepted draft committee meeting minutes
 - a. March 12, 2026 Budget & Administration/Personnel Committee

POLICY ITEMS

No consent items

PROJECTS AND PLANNING ITEMS

6. Receive Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Summary of Changes

7. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to award a contract with Capra Environmental Services for vegetation control using goats (**Resolution 44-26**)
8. Approved authorizing the Executive Director to amend a Memorandum of Agreement and Federal Transfer Agreements (FTA) with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to construct Coastal Rail Trail Segments 5 (**Resolution 45-26**)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES ITEMS

9. Accepted status report on Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenues
10. Accepted status report on Measure D revenues

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS

11. Approved updates to the SCCRTC Rules and Regulations (**Resolution 46-26**)
12. Approved appointments to the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

INFORMATION/OTHER ITEMS

13. Accepted monthly meeting schedule
14. Accepted letters from committees and staff to other agencies
 - a. March 3, 2026 Letter to Corey Aldridge, Re: South County Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF)
 - b. March 3, 2026 Letter to Jimmy Panetta, Re: Support for Community Project Funding – Granite Creek Road Overpass
 - c. March 3, 2026 Letter from Melani Clark, Roaring Camp, Inc. Re: Agenda of March 5, 2026, Item 8: Authority to Form a Nonprofit Corporation Subsidiary as Common Carrier for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and Contract Amendment 8 to Contract No. TP2061-01 with RailPros, Inc.
 - d. March 18, 2026 Letter to Senator John Laird, Re: State Budget Appropriate Request for the Environmental Component of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail Project
 - e. March 27, 2026 Letter Response to Roaring Camp's March 3, 2026 Letter Regarding the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line
15. Accepted correspondence log
16. Accepted information items - *none*

REGULAR AGENDA

17. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Martinez appreciated staff for their role in bringing federal funding to the Boulder Creek Complete Streets Project and for the celebration event with Congressperson Jimmy Panetta.

Commissioner Koenig reported on his attendance at the Central Coast Coalition Lobbying Day. Topics discussed included SB125 funding for transit operations, the Pajaro Station, the need to offset the gas tax with other funding sources, and an earmark request for funding for the Zero-Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project Environmental Impact Report.

Commissioner Clark reported on his attendance at the California Council of Governments (CALCOG) conference along with Executive Director Sarah Christensen and Internal Services Director Nisha Singh, and the graduation of Transportation Planner Tommy Travers from the California Academy of Regional Leaders (CARL) program. Commissioner Clark also reported on his attendance at the International Council of Shopping Centers and the discussion amongst business owners regarding integration of multimodal forms of transportation into places of commerce.

18. Director's Report

Executive Director Sarah Christensen reported on the recent press event cohosted by SCCRTC and Congressperson Jimmy Panetta's office to share news of \$850,000 in federal funding obtained for the Boulder Creek Complete Streets Project; announced that the Highway 1 Auxiliary Lane, Bus-on-Shoulder 41st Avenue to Soquel Drive and Chanticleer Overcrossing Project is the recipient of a WTS (Women's Transportation Seminar) Innovative Transportation Solutions Award; upcoming opening of the Panther/Yellowbank Beach parking lot and restrooms, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony tentatively scheduled for late April or early May; welcomed new RTC staff, Joel LaCagnina, Senior Transportation Engineer, and Jaeden Gales, Transportation Planner.

19. Caltrans Report

John Olejnik, Office Chief of Engagement and Public/Legislative Affairs for Caltrans District 5 delivered the project updates list and discussed the development and advancement of construction projects in the Santa Cruz County region; members of the public may subscribe to updates by emailing info-d5@dot.ca.gov.

Projects along State Route 9 include deployment of two signals north of Boulder Creek for a bridge project and two signals south of Boulder Creek for drainage improvements; utility-related work between Graham Hill Road in

Felton and the schools complex; tree trimming south of Felton; daytime and nighttime lane closures along Highway 129 and 152 in Watsonville.

Mr. Olejnik also announced the upcoming Workers' Memorial ceremony on April 29 at 10:00am in San Luis Obispo, and reminded the public to be mindful when driving in work zones.

Commissioners discussed: Appreciation for Caltrans for projects, the sidewalk on Main Street in Watsonville and for the improvements on Highways 1, 129, and 152.

Executive Director Sarah Christensen responded to Commissioners' questions regarding maintenance of the new restroom facility on Highway 1 along the North Coast; recruitment efforts.

Received public comment from:

Brian Peoples, Trail Now

20. Highway 1 State Park Drive to Bay Avenue/Porter Street Auxiliary Lanes, Bus on Shoulder, and Mar Vista Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project – Amendment to Construction Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans to Increase Construction Support Funding, Amendment to Measure D Five-Year Program of Projects for Highway Corridors Category, and Amendment to FY 2026-27 RTC Budget

Director of Capital Projects Amin AbuAmara delivered the staff report. Caltrans Project Manager Madilyn Jacobsen and Office Chief of Construction North Tim Lang gave a presentation.

Mr. AbuAmara responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the opening of the Mar Vista Overcrossing; budgeting for adaptations to unforeseen circumstances; cost estimates for pending & approved change orders; lessons learned to avoid future cost overruns.

Ms. Jacobsen responded to Commissioners' questions regarding replacing consultant staff with in-house staff; cost drivers within the change orders.

Mr. Lang responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the support-to-capital ratio; staffing and engagement during the next segment of the project.

Director of Internal Services Nisha Singh responded to a Commissioner's question regarding capacity of the Measure D-Highway Corridors category.

Executive Director Sarah Christensen responded to a Commissioner's question regarding railroad bridge replacements in the Highway projects' scopes; updates to the Measure D Strategic Implementation Plan; background information on the expenditure plan and subsequent amendments to the Measure D-Highway Corridors category and project

delivery history.

Received public comment from:
Brian Peoples, Trail Now

Commissioner Montesino made a motion and Commissioner Jensen seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to approve

Resolution 47-26:

1. Authorizing the Executive Director to execute Amendment 3 to the construction Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans for a total amount not to exceed \$4 million for the construction support component of the project;
2. Amending the Measure D Highway Corridor 5-year program of projects to program an additional \$2.7 million to the Highway 1 State Park Drive to Bay Avenue/Porter Street Auxiliary Lanes, Bus on Shoulder, and Mar Vista Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project in FY2026-27; and
3. Amending the FY2026-27 RTC budget accordingly.

The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Jensen, Keeley, Clark, Montesino, Koenig, DeSerpa, Martinez, Leonor, Kalantari-Johnson, Downing, and Commissioner Alternates Schiffrin and Hurst voting "aye."

The Chair took item 21 out of order and took the closed session items prior to consideration of item 21.

21. Approval of a Separation Agreement and Mutual Release with the current Rail Operator for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) and for an Administration, Coordination, and License Agreement with a new Rail Operator over portion of the SCBRL

Commissioner Downing recused herself from consideration of the item and left the dais.

Real Property Specialist Bella Kressman delivered the staff report and gave a presentation. General Manager Ried Dawe and Train Master Tim Bell of Chicago Rock Island Railroad, LLC introduced themselves and provided an overview of their work.

Executive Director Sarah Christensen responded to Commissioners' questions regarding: how discontinuance supports and affirms the direction to pursue and interim trail in the short term and passenger rail in the long term.

Ms. Kressman responded to Commissioners' questions regarding the

performance bond; revenue and license fees; strategic business partnerships.

Commissioners discussed: reaffirming the Commission's commitment to pursuing passenger rail service on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line with an adjacent trail in the long term.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a motion and Commissioner Keeley seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

1. Adopt **Resolution 48-26** authorizing the Executive Director to enter into the Separation Agreement and Mutual Release to effectuate termination of the current Administration, Coordination, and License Agreement with St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (SPPR), a subsidiary to Progressive Rail, Inc., for SPPR to transfer rail operations and common carrier obligations, and discontinue a portion of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL); and
2. Adopt **Resolution 49-26** authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an Administration, Coordination, and License Agreement with Chicago Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, LLC., to become the common carrier for the Watsonville Branch Line Freight Easement.

The motion passed unanimously.

Received public comment from:

Matt Farrell, Friends of the Rail and Trail
Lani Faulkner
Rosemary Sarka, Roaring Camp Railroad
Saladin Sale
Sally Arnold
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
Jean Brocklebank

22. Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27 Proposed Budget

Budget & Finance Officer Italo Jimenez delivered the staff report.

Commissioner Alternate Schiffrin made a motion and Commissioner ___ seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

1. Adopt **Resolution 50-26** approving the proposed FY 2026-27 RTC budget and work program, Measure D budget and 5-Year Plans amendments as shown on Exhibit A of Attachment 1;
2. Accept the Transportation Development Act (TDA) revenue forecast for FY 2026-27 provided by the County Auditor;

3. Accept the Measure D revenue forecast for FY 2026-27 provided by Hinderliter de Llamas Services
4. Accept the 30-year revenue projection which incorporates the Hinderliter de Llamas forecast for FY 2026-27; and
5. Accept the 5-year revenue estimates for the Measure D recipients which incorporate the Hinderliter de Llamas forecast for FY 2026-27 and calculation of the revenue distribution for local jurisdictions with updated data.
6. Receive and accept the report on the status of vacant positions in compliance with Government Code Section 3502.3 (AB 2561), and hold a public hearing as required.

The motion passed unanimously.

Received public comment from:
Brian Peoples, Trail Now

23. Review of items to be discussed in closed session.

The Chair took this item out of order and considered it after item 20. RTC Counsel Steve Mattas provided an overview of the two items on the closed session agenda and communicated that no reportable action is anticipated from closed session.

Received public comment from:
Brian Peoples, Trail Now

The Commission entered closed session at 10:49 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION

24. Conference with Real Property Negotiators
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8)
Property: Santa Cruz Branch Line Railroad Right of Way Property
Negotiating Parties: SCCRTC and St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, LLC
Under Negotiation: Price and Terms Related to License Agreement for Santa Cruz Branch Line Railroad
25. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation
(Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(2))
Significant Exposure to Litigation – One case

OPEN SESSION

26. Report of items discussed in closed session

RTC Counsel Steve Mattas communicated that there was no reportable action from closed session.

The Commission then considered items 21 and 22.

27. Steve Mattas, RTC legal counsel, stated that the Santa Cruz County Coastal Rail meeting held before the regular RTC meeting was invalid because the notice was posted slightly short of the required 72 hours. At the Commission's consideration, a special board meeting will be scheduled for Santa Cruz County Coastal Rail where the Commission can act again. He apologized for the inconvenience.

28. Next meetings

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Watsonville City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Fourth Floor, Watsonville, CA 95060.

Respectfully submitted,

Yesenia Parra, Administrative Services Officer

Attendees

Matt Farrell
Lani Faulkner
Saladin Sale
Sally Arnold
Ilia Bulaich
Antonio Rivas
Lani Faulkner
Saladin Sale
Cynthia Convisser, SCCRTC
Michael Saint
Will's iPhone 17 Pro Max
Heather Adamson, AMBAG
Paul Guirguis
Christine Cumming
Brett Garrett
Larry Pageler
Brian Peoples, Trail Now
1-831-****950
Cami Corvin

Jim Helmer
Nadene Thorne
Johanna Lighthill
Chris's iPhone 11 Pro (2)
Linda Wilshusen
Jesus Bojorquez
Noah McCann
Peter Haworth
Paula
Christina Watson, TAMC
Ryan Grady
Jim Helmer
Noah McCann
James's iPad (4)
Paula Bradley
Derek Toups
S151902
Rae Hughes, SCCRTC
Barry Scott

Nadia Noriega
Marshall Ballard, SCCRTC
Noah McCann
Max Chun
Frank Rimicci
1-831-****038
Joanna Edmonds, City of Santa Cruz
Tim Campbell
Michael N. Conneran
James Weller
Rob Tidmore, County Parks
Paul Valadao
Jillian Ritter, District 1
Nancy Yellin
Trink Praxel
Jim Helmer
Michael Lewis
Zoom user
AP
Antonio
Guest
MStarkey
Claire Gallogly, City of Santa Cruz